

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NEA-06 EUR-08 NSC-05 NSCE-00

INR-05 CIAE-00 SP-02 IO-03 PM-03 PRS-01 DODE-00 /052 W

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R 301931Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3502

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 22268

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FT, FR

SUBJECT: SECSTATE STIRN COMMENTS ON DJIBOUTI

REF: PARIS 20856 (NOTAL)

1. DURING CALL BY CHARGE JULY 30, SECSTATE FOR OVERSEAS DEPARTMENTS AND TERRITORIES OLIVIER STIRN DESCRIBED WITH CONSIDERABLE FRARKNESS FRENCH PLANS TO MOVE THE FTAI TO INDEPENDENCE. MUCH OF THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS PRESENTATION HAS ALREADY BEEN REPORTED TO THE DEPARTMENT BUT THE FOLLOWING IS OF INTEREST.

2. STIRN EXPRESSED GUARDED SATISFACTION OVER DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS, NOTING THE DEPARTURE OF ALI AREF, FINALLY FORCED UPON HIM BY THE FRENCH, AND THE ELECTION OF FTAI SEC GEN ABDALLAH KHAMIL TO REPLACE HIM. KHAMIL, A GRADUATE OF
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THE ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE, IS INTELLIGENT AND

DEPENDABLE, STIRN SAID, AND SHOULD MAKE AN ABLE HEAD OF GOVERNMENT. STIRN EXPECTED HIM TO STAY ON "AT LEAST UNTIL INDEPENDENCE". HE SAID KHAMIL HAS THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE LPAI, AND THAT HE WILL WORK FOR THE NEEDED RECONCILIATION AMONG ETHNIC GROUPS. (SEE PARIS 18701 OF JULY 1975, FOR REPORT OF A REVEALING CONVERSATION WITH KHAMIL.) STIRN SUGGESTED THAT KHAMIL MIGHT REMAIN AS PRIME MINISTER AFTER INDEPENDENCE, WITH ELDER STATESMAN HASSAN GOULED BECOMING FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC.

3. REFERRING TO HIS EARLY JUNE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE FTAI'S THREE PRINCIPAL POLITICAL GROUPS (PARIS 17077), STIRN SAID HE HAS IN HIS SAFE A SIGNED STATEMENT FROM EACH GROUP AGREEING TO A FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE AFTER INDEPENDENCE. HE NOTED THAT IT WAS BUT A PIECE OF PAPER, BUT, REPLYING TO A QUESTION, ASSERTED THAT MOST FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICAN COUNTRIES ARE IN FAVOR OF A FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE, "IF PROPERLY PRESENTED IN AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN TWO INDEPENDENT COUNTRIES", AND THAT AFRICAN OPPOSITION IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO RULE OUT SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT.

4. STIRN SAID THAT THE CURRENT FRENCH TIME-TABLE IS TO HOLD A REFERENDUM IN JANUARY 1977, ELECTIONS ABOUT TWO MONTHS LATER, AND TO GRANT INDEPENDENCE BETWEEN APRIL AND JUNE NEXT YEAR. HE HOPED THE U.S. WOULD BE READY TO SUPPORT FRENCH EFFORTS.

5. THE CHARGE ASSURED STIRN OF AMERICAN INTEREST AND SAID THAT AS WE HAD ALREADY TOLD THE QUAI, THE U.S. WOULD BE WILLING TO SUGGEST THAT MODERATE ARAB COUNTRIES OPEN CONSULATES IN DJIBOUTI. STIRN INDICATED THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED THE QUESTION THE PREVIOUS DAY WITH FORMER SECSTATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS FRANCOIS-PONCET, AND THAT "IN A SHORT WHILE", HE HOPED SUCH COUNTRIES WOULD GRADUALLY BE ABLE TO ESTABLISH CONSULATES. STIRN'S OFFER FOR PERIODIC DISCUSSIONS ON THE FTAI WAS WARMLY ACCEPTED

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BY THE CHARGE.

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

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6. COMMENT: STIRN'S OPTIMISM ABOUT THE VIABILITY OF AN INDEPENDENT DJIBOUTI APPEARS EXCESSIVE. HE CLEARLY IS MORE UPBEAT THAN THE QUAI ABOUT THE PROSPECTS BOTH FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A "NATIONAL" SPIRIT AMONG THE AFARS AND ISSAS UNDER THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND FOR THE ACCEPTANCE BY OTHER AFRICANS OF A FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE ("NOT A BASE") IN DJIBOUTI. HE ALSO BELIEVES THE FRENCH SOCIALISTS WILL BE LESS CRITICAL OF KHAMIL AND GOF SUPPORT FOR HIM THAN THEY WERE OF THE ALI AREF REGIME. ON THESE MATTERS WE BELIEVE STIRN IS OVERLY OPTIMISTIC BUT WE DO NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE FRENCH JUST MIGHT PULL IT OFF.

MEANWHILE, WE SHALL FOLLOW UP ON HIS OFFER TO STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH. HIS INVITATION IS ANOTHER SIGN OF A PERCEPTIBLY GROWING FRENCH INCLINATION TOWARDS HAVING
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US LEND THEM A HAND WITH THEIR DJIBOUTI PROBLEM. IN
ANOTHER CONVERSATION, THE QUAI ACTING UN DIRECTOR HAS
JUST ASKED FOR SUPPORT IN THE UNGA ON THE FTAI
ISSUE WHICH THE FRENCH EXPECT WILL BE DIFFICULT
FOR THEM.
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